

# When God “Calls” And We Put Him On “Hold”

Exodus 3:1 – 4:17

## INTRODUCTION:

Toughest thing I face as a pastor is when someone says: We have a problem what are **you** going to do about it? What I enjoy with our board is here’s the problem, what are **we** going to do about it?

Excuses In Answering God’s Call:

- Laziness
- Lack of time
- Not a priority
- Not willing
- Not knowing what to say
- Not successful in the past, so why try now
- Don’t see the need to
- Unwilling to
- Fear

## I. If We Knew Who Was Calling We Wouldn’t Hang Up (3:1-10)

### A. Know The One Who Call Us Is Light (3:1-4)

<sup>1</sup>Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” <sup>4</sup>When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

- A “**Christophany**” is an Old Testament appearance of Christ
  - *Christos* (Christ) or *Theo* (God); *phaino* (to appear)
  - though Christ made other O.T. appearances, coming as the Angel of the Lord is His most significant
- Why the term “**Angel**?”
  - Jesus came as an angel to be the “Messenger” of hope, goodness, comfort and miracles. His “Angel of the Lord” manifestations were representative of God working in the midst of man.
- **The Angel of the Lord must be Christ because of the similarities of nature and function in the Old and New Testaments as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Godhead**
  - The Father is invisible (Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16) and no one has ever seen Him (Jn 1:18; 5:37), but Christ revealed God in the flesh to us (Jn 1:1,14)
  - The Holy Spirit is invisible and never seen (John 14:17; 3:8).
  - Since the Father and the Holy are invisible and remain unseen, it is logical to conclude the theophanies are Jesus Christ
  - Plus the Angel of the Lord and Christ Jesus have similar ministries and titles.

- Note that the NT appearances of **an** angel of the Lord is different from the OT appearances of **the** angel of the Lord. **An** angel appeared to Joseph (Mt 1:20), released Peter (Acts 12:7)
- A NT angel (ie/ Gabriel or Michael) did not permit worship of himself (Rev 22:8-9), though **the** Angel of the Lord demanded it of Moses & Joshua (Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15)
- Christ is appearing a burning bush. Actually the bush wasn't burning – it was not being consumed. But Christ was the light of the bush telling Moses to be the light of God's mercy or judgment in his communication to Pharaoh.
- The **Burning** bush that was **not consumed** demonstrates **God's unending power**
  - **Fire also depicts the holiness of God** as well.
  - J.A. Motyer: "It starts with the fire in the bush (3:2) and ends with the fire on the mountain (19:18), and in each case fire is linked with the separateness of the divine and the exclusion of the human as endangered." (*The Message Of Exodus*, pp. 54-55)
- We are to be the containers of Christ's light as He is the light of the world – expelling the darkness of sin and death by His work on the cross.

## B. Know The One Who Calls Us Is Holy (3:5-6)

<sup>5</sup>Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup>And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

- "Holy" is used over 900x in the Bible
- Heb. *qedosh*; Gk. *hagiazō*
- "Holy" = lit. "to separate", "to divide"
- "Holy" = from Germanic origin
- "Saint" = from Romantic origin

**Exodus 15:11** "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"

**1 Samuel 2:2** "No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.

- God has no rival
- God has no competitor
- John Frame: "Holiness, then, is a very rich concept. It speaks of God's transcendence and separation from finite and sinful creatures. But it also speaks of how God draws them to himself, making them holy. Holiness marks God's transcendence, but also his immanence, his presence to redeem us. He is not only 'the Holy One,' but 'the Holy One among us,'" (*The Doctrine Of God*, p. 29)
- Moses took his sandals off because he was on Holy Ground in God's presence
- Same thing happened to Joshua in Josh 5:13-15

### C. Know The One Who Calls Us Is Merciful (3:7-10)

<sup>7</sup>Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup>and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

- God has **seen** the affliction
- **Heard** their cry
- **Knows** their suffering
  
- God is responding the suffering, the enslaved, the oppressed because He is merciful
- The solution is not about class struggle or the equalization of power
- Moses didn't come to say make the Israelites **equal** to the Egyptians
- Moses came to declare the end of **sin against** God's creation, God's people
  
- Stop and repent of sin!!
- Free those whom you have enslaved!!
- Slavery is wrong!!
- Our world is struggling because of sin.
  
- Sin must be rectified and judged.
- The merciful Christ bore the judgment of our sin on the cross.

#### Family Discussion:

- Why is it so amazing that God would ask us to do something for Him when we compare ourselves to Him?
- What does God want us to do for Him while we're alive here on earth?

## II. God Counters Our Excuses Used To Not Deliver His Message (3:11 – 4:17)

### A. We Lack Confidence (Exodus 3:11-12)

**Exodus 3:11-12** <sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup>He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

- Moses is the great deliverer of Israel from slavery in Egypt
- Moses' lived 120 years and his life could be divided into 3 parts – 40 years each
- His first 40 years were in Egypt in the Pharaoh's palace. His 2<sup>nd</sup> 40 years took place in the desert of Midian. His last 40 years took place in leaving Egypt and leading Israel through the wilderness.

- This passage (Ex 3-4) takes place in Moses' 80<sup>th</sup> year, between 40 years in Midian and 40 years in the wilderness.
- Though he was highly educated at Cairo U., had the key to the palace in his safety deposit box and was called by God by a burning bush, Moses still gave excuses.

### Moses' Life In Summary

<b>The Prince Of Egypt</b> (Exodus 2:1-15)	<b>The Shepherd Of Midian</b> (Exodus 2:16 – 4:31)	<b>The Shepherd Of Israel</b> (Exodus 5 – Deuteronomy 34)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopted by Pharaoh's daughter</li> <li>• Studies Egyptian knowledge</li> <li>• Slays Egyptian taskmaster</li> <li>• Flees to Midian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marries into Jethro's family</li> <li>• Watches Jethro's flocks</li> <li>• Encountered God at burning bush</li> <li>• Departs for Egypt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads Exodus from Egypt</li> <li>• Receives the Law at Sinai</li> <li>• Constructs Tabernacle</li> <li>• Leads in the Wilderness</li> <li>• Preaches and dies in Moab</li> </ul>
Scholar	Shepherd	Savior
40 Years of Luxury	40 Years of Exile	40 Years of Leadership
Pride	Humility	Service
Egypt	Midian	Wilderness
1525 – 1485 B.C. (Birth – 40 years)	1485 – 1445 B.C. (40-80 years)	1445 – 1405 B.C. (80-120 years)

(Bruce H. Wilkinson & Larry Libby, *Talk Thru Bible Personalities*, Walk Thru The Bible Ministries, 1983, pp. 26-27)

- At 28, when became senior pastor at FBC, I really struggled with confidence
- "Five Reasons Why I Hate Evangelism" (by Chris Walker)
  - It violates the golden rule - most Christians would not want to be approached by a member of another religion the way Christians approach others in evangelistic attempts
  - It calls the authenticity of relationships into question - are you my friend because you're really my friend, or so you can convert me?
  - The moment of truth - we think we must identify a "no turning back" point where you pressure someone to make a decision, and if they don't respond well, that jeopardizes the relationship.
  - Asking someone about the Gospel feels like making a pass at them.
  - If I like my friends, and want them to continue to be my friends, I have a major incentive NOT to try to evangelize them.

<https://www.evangelismcoach.org/evangelism-fears/>

**Ephesians 3:8** <sup>8</sup>To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

- Too often, we fear because we focus on our lack of ability, lack of status, lack of knowledge. We focus on the messenger, ourselves. Then we become intimidated.
- **We Need To Be Continually Excited About How Beneficial Our Salvation Is**
- "preach" = *euangelizo*
  - announce the good news
  - 55x in NT
  - announce, declare, show

- *eu* = good
- *angelos* = announce

## B. We Don't Know What To Say (Exodus 3:13-32)

**Exodus 3:13-14** <sup>13</sup>Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.' "

- Say God sent you
- Say Yahweh – the self-existent God who has no beginning or end has sent you
- Jesus later calls Himself "I Am" – a clear statement that He is Yahweh

**Exodus 3:15-32** <sup>15</sup>God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. <sup>16</sup>Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, <sup>17</sup>and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey." ' <sup>18</sup>And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.' <sup>19</sup>But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. <sup>20</sup>So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. <sup>21</sup>And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, <sup>22</sup>but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

- Gather the nation and tell them I sent you
- Gather the elders
- Will take you to the land flowing with milk and honey (17)
- <sup>19</sup>But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.
- We share the Gospel with others not through personal authority or the authority of the Church, but Christ Himself.

**Matthew 28:19-20** <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, "**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>**Go** therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

- Dawson Trotman - founder of the Navigators - who died after rescuing drowning children in a lake - said "**Soul winners aren't soulwinners because of what they know, but who they know, and how well they know him and how much they long for others to know them.**"

### C. We Fear Failure & Rejection (Exodus 4:1-9)

**Exodus 4:1** Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'"

**4** Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" <sup>2</sup>The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup>And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. <sup>4</sup>But the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— <sup>5</sup>"that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." <sup>6</sup>Again, the Lord said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup>Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. <sup>8</sup>"If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. <sup>9</sup>If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

- Yet our confidence is in the sovereignty of God.
- He proved this to Moses through
  - the 10 judgments
  - crossing the Red Sea
  - providing water, manna and a sacrifice.
- The world will hate us.
- The U.S. hates Christians like China hates Christians!

**Matthew 10:22** "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake."

**Matthew 10:28** <sup>28</sup>And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

- Howard Hendricks in his book on evangelism called *Say It With Love* said "I am convinced the world is more eager to hear our message than we are to deliver it."

### D. We Use Our Limitations As Excuses (Exodus 4:10-12)

**Exodus 4:10-12** <sup>10</sup>But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." <sup>11</sup>Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? <sup>12</sup>Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

- Moses could have been shy
- Maybe he had a stuttering problem

- Maybe he was intimidated challenging the educated Egyptians with rhetoric
- Moses is 80 at this point and maybe his speaking skills are not as sharp – talking to sheep is a little different than addressing government officials
- Maybe he didn't remember his Egyptian language well enough after 40 years to carry on a heavy dialogue
- God made us just the way we are!
- God will use those who can't speak, see or hear.
- Paul was criticized for being verbose, not strong in stature and not impressive in speaking

**2 Corinthians 10:10** For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."

- If Moses lacks communication skills and Paul is unimpressive with his speech, we are in good company if that is our struggle.
- **The best ability we can give God is our Avail-ability!!**

#### **E. We Would Rather Have Someone Else Do It (Exodus 4:13-17)**

**Exodus 4:13** <sup>13</sup>But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."

<sup>13</sup>But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." <sup>14</sup>Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. <sup>15</sup>You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. <sup>16</sup>He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. <sup>17</sup>And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

- Jill Briscoe wrote a book: "Lord, Here I Am, Send Aaron"
- Here's where **God's patience** was **replaced by anger** because Moses was starting to take this excuse stuff to seriously
- Isn't It The Pastor's Job?
- That's what the sponsors are for!
- We have enough Quest leaders – let them do it!

**Colossians 1:29** <sup>29</sup>To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

- We Lack Confidence (Exodus 3:11 "Who am I?")
- We Don't Know What To Say (Exodus 3:13 "What shall I say to them?")
- We Fear Failure & Rejection (Exodus 4:1 "But ... they will not believe me or listen to my voice")

- We Use Our Limitations As Excuses (Exodus 4:10 "I am not eloquent ... I am slow of speech and of tongue")
- We Would Rather Have Someone Else Do It (Exodus 4:13 "please send someone else")

**Family Discussion:**

- How are the excuses we give for homework and chores similar to the excuses we might give to God?
- What's our biggest excuse and how should we overcome it?

**Conclusion:**

- God sent a Deliverer to cure the sin problem in our lives and in this world.
- Stop giving excuses delivering the message of the Deliverer.
- Answer God's call to serve Him, proclaim Him and glorify Him.